

**Election Commission took orders from Putrajaya, Ambiga tells Bersih tribunal**  
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**BY MUZLIZA MUSTAFA**

Bersih co-chair Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan said the Election Commission (EC) acted under the instructions of Putrajaya when it should have acted as an independent body.

Ambiga, who was the last witness at the Bersih People's Tribunal in Subang Jaya, stressed that the EC had taken a partisan approach when making statements.

"EC acted like they were under Putrajaya's control. I have problems with the commission for their failure in giving proper explanations on the issues surrounding the electoral roll and others under their purview," she said today.

She added that the commission would not say anything when election-related issues cropped up.

"They failed to fulfil their responsibilities to investigate political violence and other serious allegations during GE13," said Ambiga.

She told the tribunal the EC's sole responsibility was election matters. "If they have not got it right, it just shows their lack of empowerment," said Ambiga.

"It's like their hands were tied."

Among the issues brought to the tribunal's attention was how the electoral roll did not tally with the data kept by the National Registration Department, the indelible ink, and phantom voters as well as postal voters.

Ambiga said the EC had failed Malaysians on the indelible ink issue.

"They cannot do this and give wishy-washy answers. They are just letting it fade away and hope everybody will forget all about it.

"Many questions were not answered. This is not right.

"EC should be the one advising the government, not following their orders," said Ambiga.

She said the EC should be independent as it managed the selection process that decided which party would form the next government.

The attitude of the EC leadership, like its deputy chairman Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar, was also raised as he was seen to be always criticising the opposition.

One of the tribunal's members, Professor Madya Dr Mavis Puthuchery, later said the tribunal should focus on how to improve the EC structure instead of only looking at the weaknesses of its members.

"Our role here is not to criticise the EC but to improve the system. Maybe their hands were really tied legally," said the former Universiti Malaya Faculty of Economics and

Administration associate professor.

The tribunal started on September 18 and ended today.

Ambiga also stated it would be difficult to remove the EC members as they were appointed by the King.

Ambiga testified to a packed room. Among other witnesses today was former Kuala Selangor MP Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad. Also seen there was Bersih co-chair Datuk A Samad Said.  
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